

DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 3

APRIL 1987

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The first Annual General Meeting of the Devon Buildings Group was held in the Chapter House of Exeter Cathedral on 18 October 1986, chaired by James Moir. I reported on the Group's activities since its inauguration and Miriam Moir submitted the Treasurer's report. Copies of a draft constitution had been sent out to members earlier and, with a couple of amendments, this was formally adopted by the meeting. The most important of the changes to the draft was that Officers and Committee members should serve for three years, with a third of the latter retiring each year. All members should now have received a copy of the final constitution. The following were elected to the new DBG Committee: Chris Brooks (Secretary), Isabel Richardson (Treasurer), Veronica Chesher, Joanna Cox, Peter Dare, David Evans, Michael Laithwaite, Prue Phillips, John Schofield, John Thorp and Allen Van Der Steen. Subsequently, these have been joined by Jenefer Chesher. At the AGM James and Miriam Moir did not stand for election to the Committee, though they continue as members of the Group: they have left Devon to run the Chiltern Open Air Museum in Hertfordshire. The DBG owes them both a great debt of thanks: they were founder members of the Group and their contribution to its organization and to casework has been invaluable.

The case of Charles Fowler's Exminster Hospital continues. The Health Authority submitted a sequence of applications for outline planning permission on various parts of the grounds. These showed no evidence of the kind of integrated approach to the development of the site that is necessary to safeguard the future of the central historic buildings: consequently, we objected to the applications, as did the Victorian Society. The proposals have now been withdrawn. Given the evident uncertainty of the Health Authority's whole approach, the Committee decided to try to initiate some more positive action. Accordingly, in January, Jo Cox and I had a meeting in London with John Fidler of English Heritage, who, at the time, was responsible for Buildings at Risk. He advised us to commission a feasibility study of the Exminster site and to apply to English Heritage for funding. The DBG approached John Burrell of Burrell Foley Associates, whose work on the re-use of hospitals I mentioned in my last report, and he prepared an outline proposal for a feasibility study. With the full support of Teignbridge District Council, the Group submitted this to English Heritage with a request for funding. We await the outcome.

The threat to Exminster is, of course, paralleled at other hospitals no longer required by the NHS: one such is Digby Hospital, on the edge of Exeter. Digby was built as the City of Exeter Lunatic Asylum in 1884-6; the architect was Robert Stark Wilkinson, whose designs were placed first out of a competition entry of forty. The hospital is in the Flemish Renaissance manner, largely of red brick, and using a lot of terra cotta detailing: in 1876, Wilkinson, then in partnership with Tarring and Sons, had designed the Lambeth Embankment premises of the ceramics firm, Doulton. Digby is planned around a large central block incorporating offices, dining rooms and a recreation hall; rear wings to this main block contained workshops and service rooms; the very long front wings, running at right angles to the centrally placed recreation hall and forming the principal elevation, contained day rooms on the ground floor and dormitories above. The Health Authority's initial proposals for redeveloping Digby envisaged clearance of the site, at which point a member of the Group drew the case to the attention of the Committee. After research we were able to provide Exeter City Council and the Victorian Society with historical details of the hospital, including the plans and elevations published in *The Builder* in 1882. Formal application was then made for the building to be listed. In the meantime, the Health Authority, to an extent, had moderated its initial proposals and put forward a scheme for redeveloping the site as a shopping complex, retaining only the main elevation. This application was refused by Exeter City Council and, as members will know, is now the subject of a comprehensive planning inquiry. At the end of March - with the inquiry well underway - English Heritage announced that the main hospital building, the medical superintendent's house, the chapel, and the lodge gates had all been listed Grade II. It is uncertain whether the listing will affect the present inquiry, though representations have been made to the Inspector. Nevertheless, listed building consent will eventually be needed for any redevelopment of the hospital, which is the essential first step towards trying to ensure sympathetic treatment of the historic fabric - though, judging from the current scheme, this may not be easy.

In such a context, the government guidelines for the redevelopment of mental hospital sites, announced on 7 April, are particularly welcome. They recognise that many mental hospitals are of major architectural and historical importance and must be preserved, as also must the mature planting and landscaping that surrounds them. The recommendations specifically warn against any redevelopment that proposes merely to clear a site and fill it with housing: preferred schemes will be those that benefit the community at large. The guidelines clearly reflect the arguments that have been put forward over the last few years by architects like John Burrell and by conservation bodies - not least among them the Devon Buildings Group. They should help Local Health Authorities to arrive at policies which will balance the need to make money from redevelopment with the need to safeguard major buildings and landscape. Above all, from our point of view, following the guidelines will necessitate the conservation and sympathetic re-use of historic buildings as part of an integrated redevelopment programme - precisely the approach for which we have been arguing over the last two years.

A major new case in which the DBG has been involved is that of Exeter Guildhall. One of the most familiar historic buildings in the county, the Guildhall is listed Grade I and scheduled as an Ancient Monument. Concern over the structural condition of the building led Exeter City Council to begin a major programme of repair and consolidation, under the direction of the City's own architects department. The work being done during the first phase of the programme rapidly gave rise to alarm: we learnt that English Heritage, who were

providing grant aid, were unhappy about several aspects of the scheme; original stonework which could have been conserved was being replaced with new stone; what was thought to have been a chimney stack, but what may well have been the Guildhall's original bellcote, was destroyed without any opportunity of archaeological investigation; astonishingly, the moulded plaster ceiling to the Mayor's parlour, probably dating from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, was entirely lost and a replica substituted. By the end of 1986 the first phase of the work had been completed and John Thorp, John Schofield and I arranged to see the building in detail and to meet the architect currently in charge of the work. We were told that the plaster ceiling had collapsed despite the precautions to prop it that had been taken; we were also assured that stone had only been replaced where strictly necessary and that this would continue to be the policy. Unfortunately, it cannot be said that we felt satisfied with the assurances given about work in the future, nor with such explanations as were offered for some of the features of the work already done. As well as our own involvement, John Schofield has reported to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and we are in touch with the Ancient Monuments Society. The City Council undoubtedly wants to do the right thing at the Guildhall, but they must recognise the widespread concern that is felt about the appropriateness of the policy that has been adopted so far. In conjunction with other groups we will be asking to see the detailed proposals for the second phase of work. Members will find an article on the Guildhall in the present Newsletter.

Among other new cases, two Victorian churches on the edge of the centre of Torquay have been threatened with demolition. The eccentric and visually delightful First Church of Christ Scientist on Torwood Gardens and, standing almost opposite, the Babbacombe Road Methodist Church, are both in a conservation area: they are no longer required by their congregations and applications for permission to demolish were made early this year. Along with the Victorian Society and the Ancient Monuments Society, the DBG objected to the applications; as we understand, permission to demolish has since been refused in both cases. The future of the two buildings remains uncertain. Another central Torquay church that is a cause for concern is St John's Anglican church. Designed by G. E. Street, the architect of the Law Courts, St John's was built between 1861 and 1871, the saddleback tower being completed in 1884-5, after Street's death. Standing high over the harbour, St John's is one of the great Victorian churches of Devon, with stained glass by Morris, mosaics by Salviati, and carving by Earp. Although, over the years, every effort has been made to maintain the fabric, extensive work is now urgently needed. Pastorally, its future seems precarious and its small congregation is faced by a massive bill for repairs. Grant aid from English Heritage should be forthcoming, but the amount of money the parish will need to raise will still be very large. An appeal has been launched and the DBG has written in support. The fact that all three endangered churches are on the perimeter of central Torquay is not, of course, coincidental. Broadly, their predicament is a consequence of the steep decline in church attendance nationally; in local terms, it is a result of the depopulation of the middle of Torquay. Members will doubtless be aware of the long battle that has been fought, and that continues, over Torbay Council's proposal to demolish three and a half acres of the central Torquay conservation area in order to make way for a huge shopping complex. The whole sorry history was well underway before the DBG was set up, and we have not been directly involved in the case - though, if we were to be, there is no doubt as to which side the Group would be on. The proposed redevelopment does, however, bear directly on the three churches with which we are concerned. If the Council's proposals go ahead - and, despite the

opposition from conservation interests at all levels, this seems likely - the depopulation of the centre of the town will be confirmed, and the process that has replaced residents with shoppers will be complete. Buildings designed to meet the needs of a resident local community, which churches are, will become superfluous, for there will be no community for them to serve. Once redundant, a building is under threat, and, if the centre of the town is turned over entirely to shopping, there is no telling what additional pressures may accrue in the adjacent areas. Coming events cast their shadows before, and the current plight of the three central Torquay churches looks like an ominous sign for the future.

The Group has also been active in a range of other casework. We have been worried about the future of an interesting late medieval house, Pauls Shop, in the middle of Germansweek village, and about the condition of Cross House in Bishopsteignton - an outstanding early nineteenth-century villa that is being allowed to fall derelict. These two cases involve important wider issues, and articles about both buildings appear later in this Newsletter. An application has been made for permission to demolish Riverside House in Bovey Tracey. Listed Grade II, this is a very attractive early nineteenth-century house, entirely in a traditional vernacular manner and surviving very much as built. It stands on the main street, just above Bovey Bridge, and occupies a crucial position in the townscape: it is intended to replace it with an access road to a new bungalow. The DBG has objected to Teignbridge, and we await the outcome. In Exeter, we have objected to proposals to build new housing behind one of the houses in Colleton Crescent, the whole of which is listed Grade II* and which stands in the middle of a conservation area. Pressure for development in this part of Exeter, close to the Quay, is worrying and the situation has not been helped by the City Council's decision to grant outline planning consent for the conversion of the north and south warehouses on the Quay itself into an hotel. Several old cases have recurred over the last few months. Mid-Devon District Council has at last put forward various proposals for redeveloping the old market site in Crediton: in the past the DBG has protested to the Council about the condition of one of the original corner buildings remaining on the site. The Council's preferred scheme involves demolishing this building, despite it's being listed: the reason given is the impossibility of designing any new buildings that will incorporate it. Considering that the building in question is a modestly-scaled structure in red brick, such a frank admission of incapacity is, to say the least, surprising. We have objected. At Neopardy Farm, Venny Tedburn, new proposals for converting the barns to residential use have been submitted, but seem to show as little sensitivity towards the character and quality of the existing buildings as did earlier schemes. More positively, we have renewed our request for the listing of Barcombe Hall in Paignton, a stylistically eclectic villa built in 1837-8 and of considerable architectural and historical interest. For reasons that are entirely unclear, English Heritage has twice refused to list it. The house now turns out to have been designed by Edward Davis, a pupil of Soane who did much work in Bath. As we understand it, no less an authority than Howard Colvin is now asking for it to be listed: as he is one of the English Heritage Commissioners, perhaps Barcombe Hall will eventually be given the statutory protection it should have had in the first place.

Finally, it is a pleasure to be able to report a substantial conservation victory. In 1981, the Roman Catholic authorities in Devon applied for listed building consent to demolish the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Barnstaple. Designed in the Romanesque style, the church was built in two stages between 1844 and 1855; the supervising architect for the first phase was William

Boyce of Tiverton, for the second, R. D. Gould of Barnstaple. Documentary evidence suggests, though not as yet conclusively, that the great A. W. N. Pugin was involved at an early point in the design process. At the Public Inquiry that resulted from the application, permission was given - in my view unfortunately - for the demolition of ancillary buildings on the site, but refused for the church itself. Subsequently, English Heritage declared the building outstanding and offered grant aid towards the repairs that were needed. In 1986, a new application to demolish the church was made and a second Public Inquiry held in November. Along with a number of conservation bodies, the DBG submitted written evidence, part of which was in support of the evidence to be given by the Victorian Society, which I represented as I had done in 1981. The North Devon Conservation Society also gave evidence and it was a major help to have English Heritage opposing the application and represented in person. In his decision announced earlier this month, the Inspector who took the Inquiry refused to grant permission to demolish the church. The arguments against demolition advanced by the organizations present at the Inquiry were mutually supportive, and were strongly backed - without being merely repeated - by the written representations. The result was a balanced case put forward by both national and local bodies, and supported by the central government agency most directly concerned. Aspects of the case could have been stronger: the need for an experienced engineer to argue estimates and quantities was particularly evident. Nevertheless, the Inquiry has shown how successful a co-ordinated conservation approach can be. The result should be an encouragement to all of us.

Most of the contributions to the present Newsletter deal with cases of current concern to the Group, and it seems likely that this will continue to be the pattern. But the DBG is also committed to working generally for the better understanding of historic buildings in the county, whether or not they come up as part of casework. So, in the present issue, I am pleased to be able to include an article on the building activities of the Phillips family of Woodbury: members who may wish to make similar contributions, not specifically related to casework, will always be welcome to do so.

Chris Brooks

EXETER GUILDHALL

A programme of major structural repairs to the front block of the Guildhall took place in 1986. This included as a preliminary stage an architectural survey by the Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit. The repairs involved the removal or concealment of parts of the ancient fabric and, when informed of these in advance, the Unit was able to record these and assess their significance.

HISTORY

The main hall of the Guildhall complex was probably built in the 1330s, but a Guildhall has stood on this site since the twelfth century. The roof of the hall and all other visible features are later, major alterations having taken place between 1464 and 1486: the roof probably dates to 1484-5. Most fittings now to be seen are nineteenth century. To the rear of the hall, up to the frontage of Waterbeer Street, were a number of buildings around a small court, used variously for storing City records, cells, and accommodation for courts.

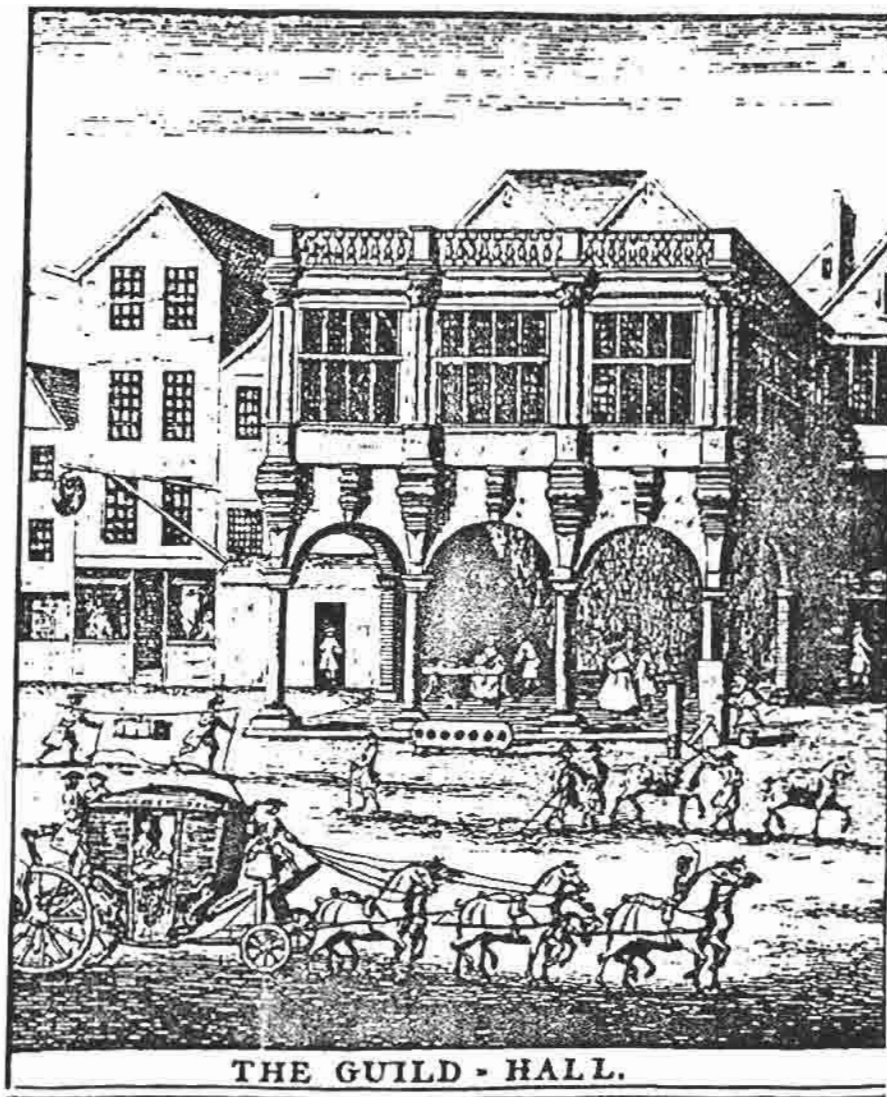


Figure 1. View from Rocque's Map of Exeter 1744 (Royal Albert Memorial Museum)

The front block as seen today was completely reconstructed in 1593-4. Before the reconstruction this area contained the chapel of St George with accomodation for a resident chaplain above it. This late medieval front block is depicted on Hooker's map of Exeter, drawn in 1587, and is repeated on various later editions - for example, Braun and Hogenburg of 1618 - although the structure had been rebuilt in the meantime. From these representations it can be seen that there was a covered walkway in front of the building in the earlier version, and it was presumably this which inspired the street frontage with a colonnaded 'piazza' beneath. Originally this was much deeper than it is now, extending back to the door of the main hall, but the area up to the street frontage was gradually enclosed to provide additional rooms for the City's administrative and judicial functions.

The chapel ceased to be used for civic worship with the dissolution of the chantries by Edward VI in 1547, and from that time the front block seems to have gradually assumed the administrative functions which were confirmed in the arrangement of the reconstructed building. The first floor contained the Council Chamber - in what is now termed the Mayor's Parlour - and the second was used as offices and for storing records. The present flat lead roof over the front part

of the Council Chamber was there from the beginning and must have been used for various ceremonial purposes - a use which survives today only in the Lammasday ceremony. The piazza at street level formed a public concourse where market stalls were set up, official ceremonies were enacted, and, occasionally, justice was dispensed. The last record of executions there is in 1483-4 when three men were beheaded 'before the door of the Hall', but lesser forms of punishment survived for longer: the pillory stood in front of the Guildhall, and Rocque's view of 1744 (1) shows stocks in front of the colonnade.

DOCUMENTATION

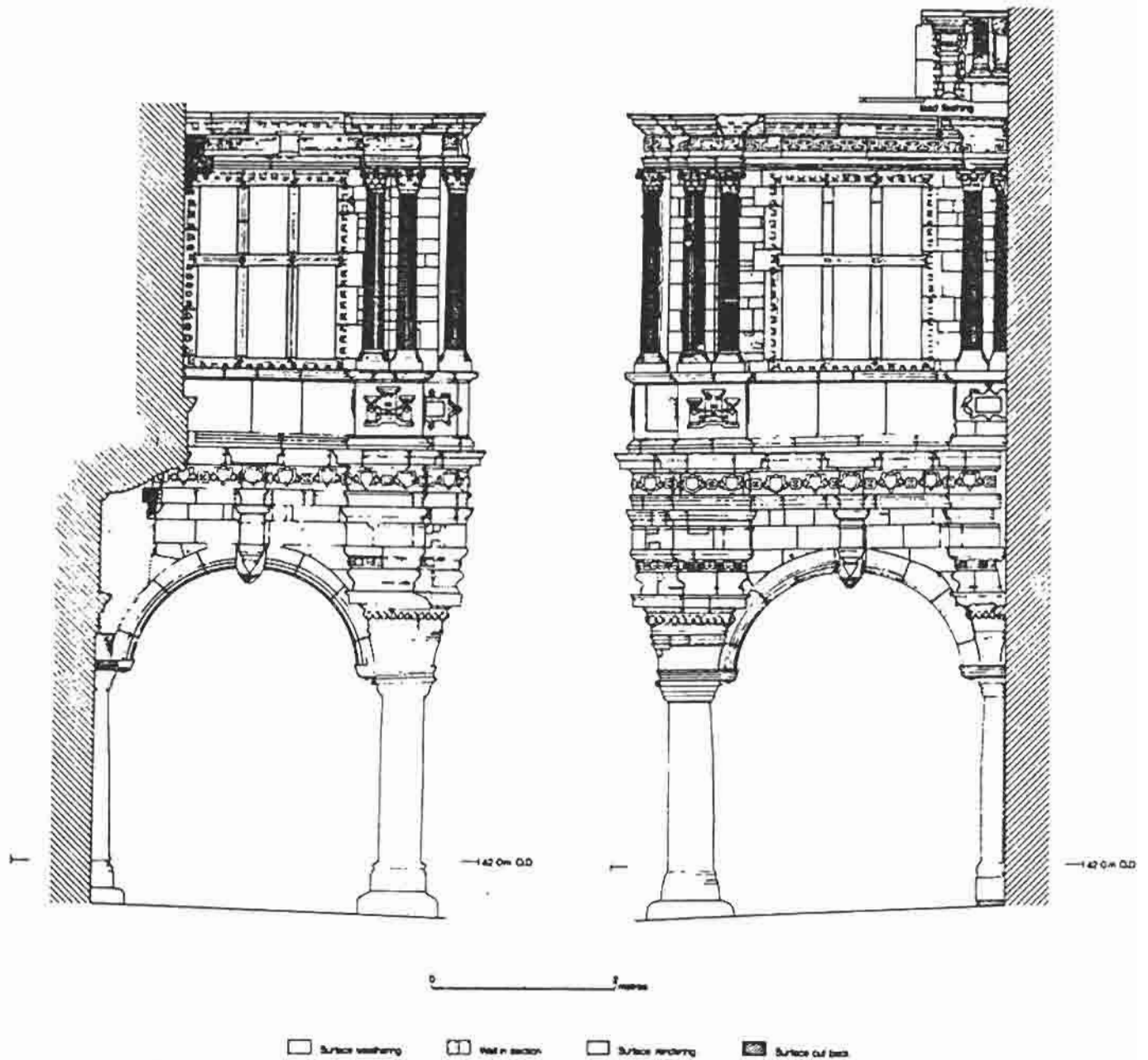
The architectural interest of the front block of the Guildhall is enormously enhanced by the quality and quantity of documents relating to all aspects of its construction and subsequent maintenance. These are especially valuable for the period 1592-5 which covers the planning of the rebuilding, the work itself, and subsequent finishing off and tidying-up operations. The Receiver's Accounts for the period contain details of materials acquired, the labour force, and the names of specialist craftsmen employed for particular jobs - for instance, one Arnoll Hamlyn or Haryson, who carved the capitals to the columns of the first floor stage at a cost of 6s. 8d. each. From all these a clear picture of the progress of the work may be built up. For example, the earliest payments are for the granite pillars for the colonnade, probably brought from Blackingstone Rock on the eastern edge of Dartmoor. The bulk of payments for materials in the first weeks of the work concern the acquisition of stone and bonding materials. Thereafter the construction may be followed by purchases of tools, timber, and materials for plastering, roofing and decoration. The whole body of accounts, coupled with the decisions of the Council minuted in the Chamber Act Book, give an insight into the construction of the front block that is exceptionally detailed and rarely available in the study of ancient buildings.

The cost of the late sixteenth-century rebuilding was immense. Over the three years 1592-3, 1593-4, and 1594-5 - seventy continuous working weeks - the total expenditure was £791 6s. 7d., very nearly one third of the City's total income of £2513 9s. 7d. for the same period.

The existence of documentary evidence of such quality has increased the scope of survey work on the building. There is a similar wealth of material for the later history of the front block, and many documents from the period between 1600 and 1905 have been examined. These have yielded information relating to maintenance and repair which has allowed the precise dating of alterations to the fabric. The documents culminate in two late nineteenth-century reports on the structural condition of the building: these led to a repair programme under the direction of the leading conservation architect William Weir, who was appointed by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1900-01.

THE BUILDING

Survey work on the front block was undertaken in two parts, connected with the repair programme. The first phase examined the interior of the building, its floors, internal fabric and roof, and recorded as much as was accessible: obviously, areas retaining wainscot or plaster, of which there were many, were not subject to this kind of investigation. The second phase concentrated on the exterior fabric and ornament, and was carried out from scaffolding in July 1986. New drawings were made of all three exterior elevations (2, 3, 4), with exterior sections/elevations (5) and detailed drawings as necessary.



Guildhall front block 1593-4.

Figure 2. West elevation.

Figure 3. East elevation.

The facades of the front block comprise Beer stone facework with a core of rubble mainly made up of volcanic trap obtained from Northernhay outside the east gate of the city, but with some red breccia, of the Heavitree type, from Peamore, south of the city. The Beer stone facades bear ornament of Renaissance derivation, with detached fluted columns with composite capitals. Most of the pedestals of the paired columns bear cartouche panels. However, the southern pedestals on the east and west elevations are carved with triple-towered castles, doubtless in reference to the arms of the city. Some of the Beer stone blocks used in the facade were re-used from an older building, possibly the predecessor on this site, for when some blocks were removed during renovations in 1970 they were found to bear carvings on their rear faces. Two of these, one showing an angel and the other a saint - probably St Nicholas - are now displayed at St Nicholas's Priory in Exeter.

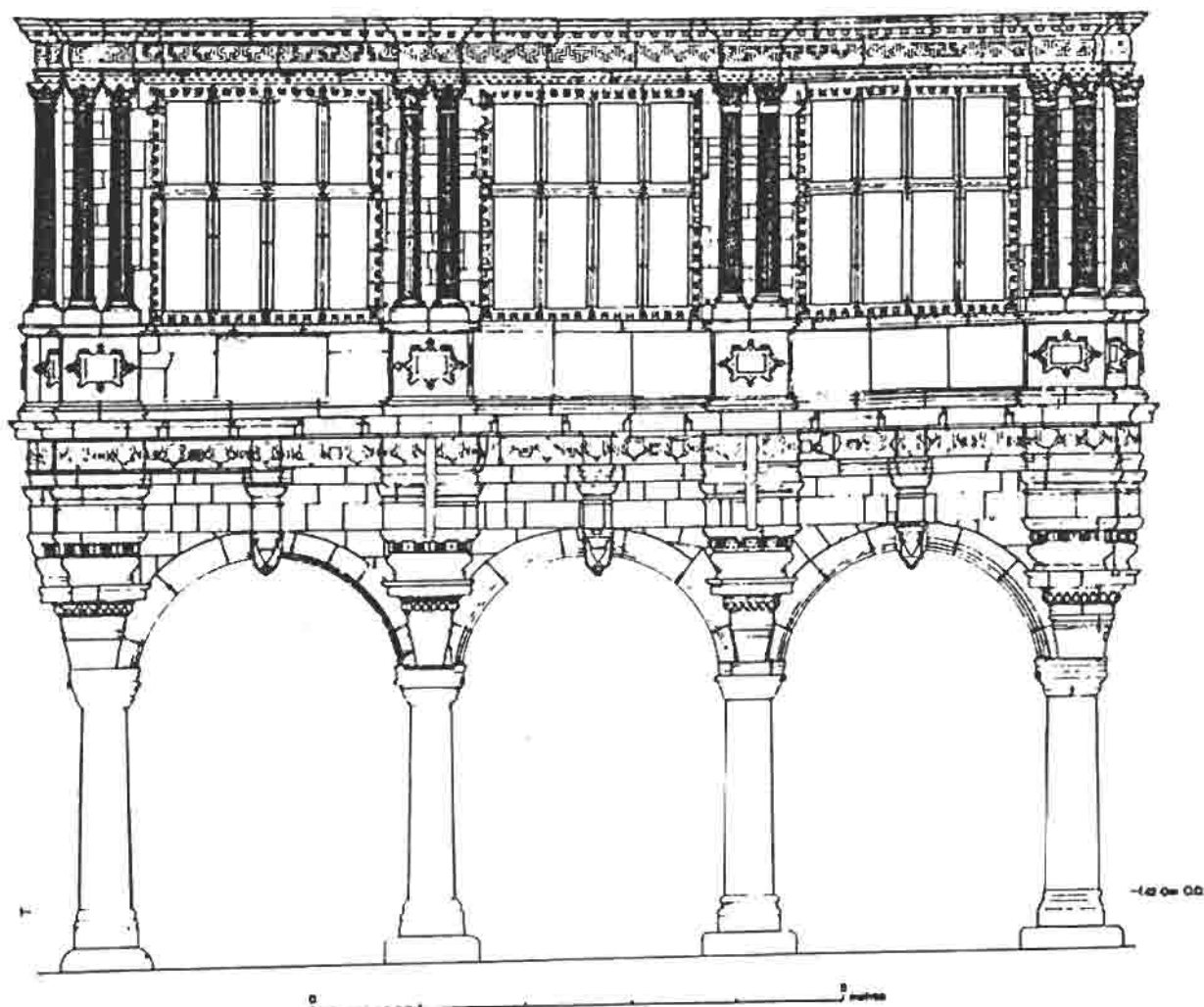


Figure 4. Guildhall front block 1593-4, South elevation.

The whole of the High Street elevations were once painted, and many traces of bright colour have been recorded in small patches where they have been protected from weathering and previous cleaning operations. A number of colours have been identified: for example, there was blue on the fretted frieze at the top of the building, and several shades of red elsewhere. It is hoped to obtain more information on the original colouring after samples have been analysed.

Inside the building the floors were supported on massive oak beams and joists. Cores were taken from these for dendrochronological analysis (tree-ring dating): from one beam, which retained fragments of bark, a felling date of 1592 has been obtained. This was anticipated from the documents. In a Chamber Act Book entry for 2 November 1592 the following order occurs: 'And they shall also veve Duriurde [Duryard Wood, owned by the city] what tymer ys there to be used in the said buildinges & they to make choice thereof & appoint the same to be filled [felled] in the beste season...'. Some old timber was used since several beams bear mouldings or mortises at variance with the 1593-4 structure: these too may have been salvaged from the late medieval building on the site.

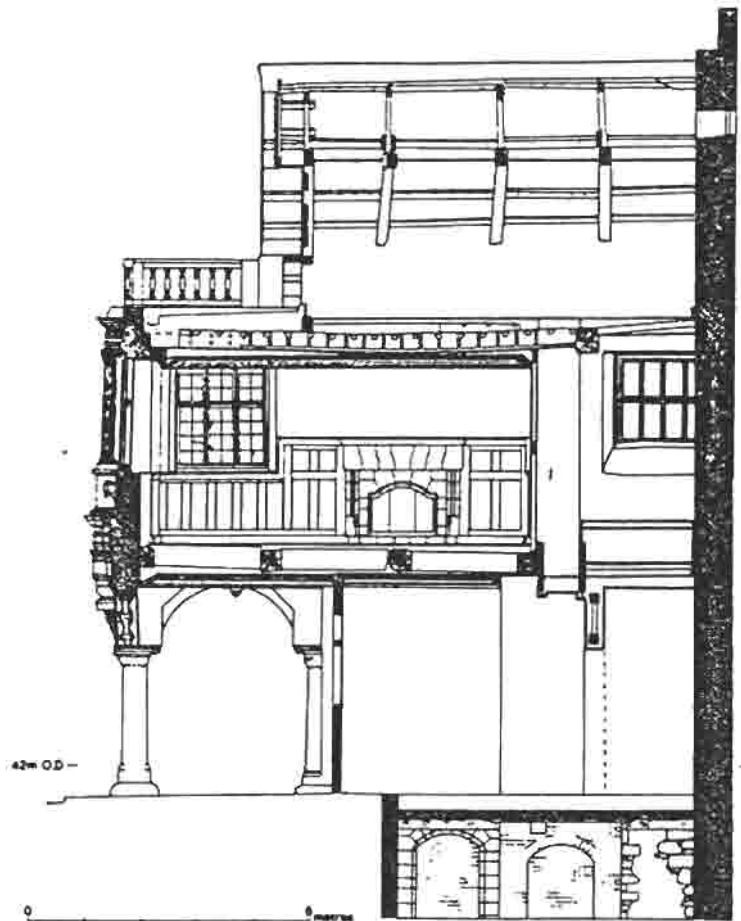


Figure 5. Guildhall front block 1593-4, section.

The Council Chamber, now the Mayor's Parlour, was the principal room in the new front block and, accordingly, was handsomely decorated. It was approached from the main hall by a stair which led onto a landing and thence into the chamber. The fireplace of volcanic stone with moulded jambs is partly original, though restored in 1900. The walls were plastered and wainscotted in oak, and there was a plaster ceiling - though not that removed in 1986, which was probably of the early eighteenth century. The windows were filled with coloured heraldic glass by one William Russell, who, in the 1594-5 account, was paid £3 15s. '...for 139 foote glass & armes accompted @ 6d the foote'.

The second floor was undoubtedly plainer, since it was used for offices and storage. The roof is of an interesting construction, being effectively two separate structures. The trusses of the two gables sit on the collar beams of the lower roof. On the eastern wall at roof level was a bellcote with a fifteenth-century bell: this was probably made in 1484-5 by the Exeter bell-founder Robert Norton, although there is no direct documentary evidence for this. The bell survives in the Guildhall, though long since removed from its original position.

The main entrance to the hall on the ground floor was closed by the very fine carved door which still hangs there, although at the other end of the entrance passage. From the accounts we learn that this was the work of Nicholas Baggett who was paid £4 10s. for it in February 1594.

Beneath the western half of the building is a cellar which was anciently used as a prison. This was entered from an adjoining cellar, now blocked, beneath the Turk's Head Inn. Known as the 'pytt of the GUILDHALL' it must have been an awful place. On unfortunate, confined there for forty days with bread and water on Wednesdays and Fridays only, was released on his repentance after twenty-four !

FUTURE WORK

Work will continue on the Guildhall in the coming year. While most of the recording work on the fabric of the front block is complete, the conservation of the external stonework which remains to be done will be monitored and, it is hoped, may yield more information on the structure and its decoration. An opportunity to examine the roof of the main hall will also arise when it is redecorated, and here it is intended to record aspects of the roof so far unrecorded - details of the carpentry and the various carvings in the joints and cusps of the timbers. Drawings of sections of the roof were made in 1875 by James Crocker, and published in 1886 in his *Sketches of Old Exeter*, but much remains to be discovered.

A detailed preliminary report on the work at the Guildhall has been prepared and is available from the Archaeological Field Unit to anybody interested.

Stuart Blaylock
Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit

PAULS SHOP, GERMANSWEEK

The case of the house known as Pauls Shop in Germansweek highlights a problem in Devon which is likely to escalate in the next few years as the implications of the listing resurvey become apparent. Pauls Shop is one of a significant number of abandoned farmhouses which exist in the county and which, presumably for long term economic reasons, seem most prevalent in West Devon. The extent of this problem has been revealed by the current government revision of the list of statutorily protected buildings, as part of which every rural building in the county is being inspected. Many buildings in isolated positions or remote areas, previously unrecognised as being of architectural and historical importance, are now becoming known. Sometimes an old farmhouse has been superseded by a new one; in other cases a whole farmstead has been abandoned when farms have been amalgamated. As these buildings are being listed so the problem is being intensified, for their owners then become legally liable - at least in theory - for their maintenance. Pauls Shop was in fact spot-listed before the resurvey, but a combination of the increasing deterioration in its condition, the concern of local residents, and its inspection by the resurvey fieldworker decided the DBG Committee that some form of action should be taken in an effort to save it.

Pauls Shop is a good example of the kind of historical development characteristic of much Devon vernacular. Its origins are late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, and it may have been the Church house. It has local stone rubble walls up to the first floor, continued in plastered cob. The building is gabled at the right end, hipped at the left end, and has a catslide roof over a rear outshut: the whole of the roof covering is now of corrugated iron. There are

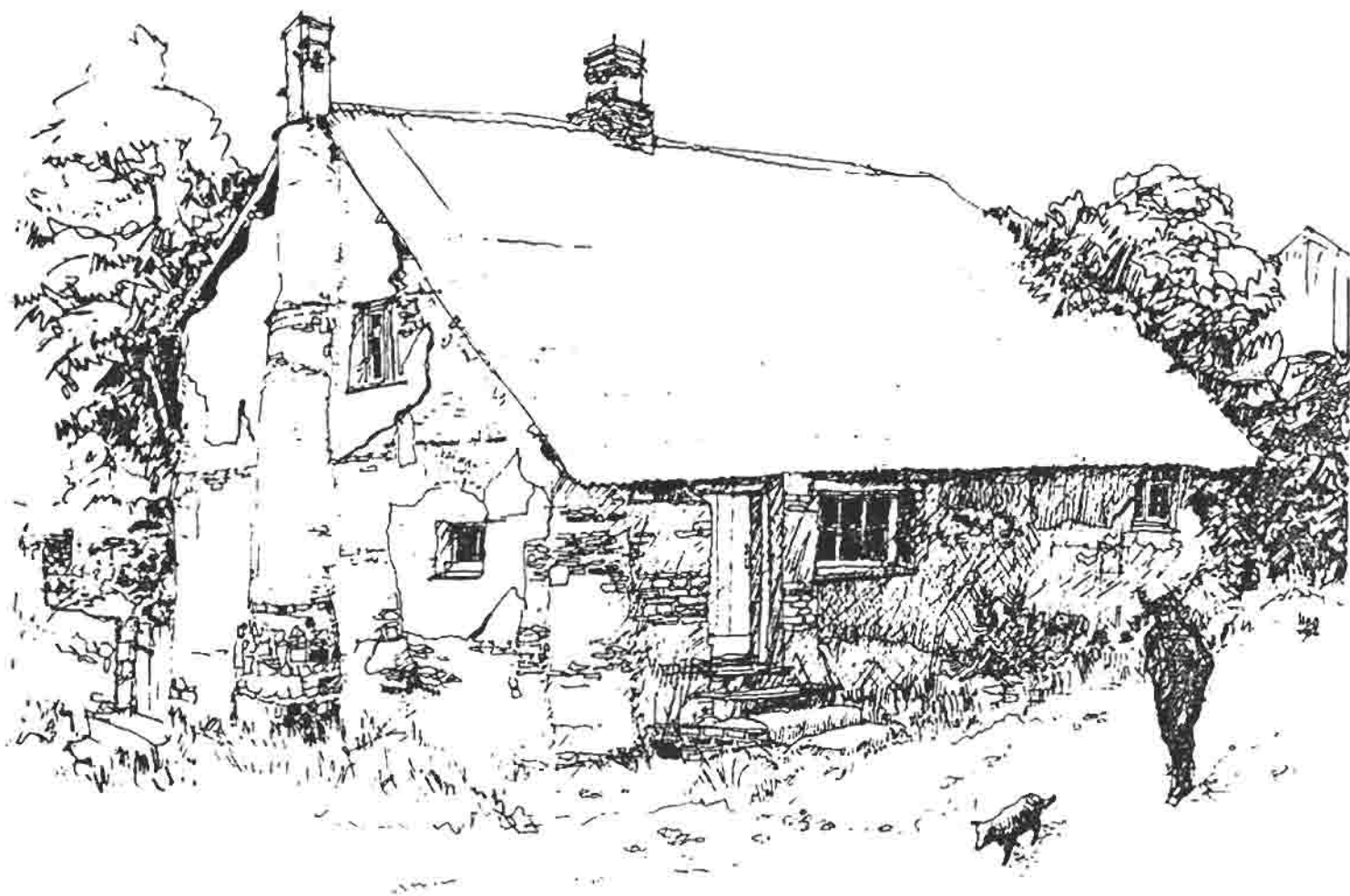


Figure 6. Pauls Shop, Germansweek (Brian Blakeway)

two rubble stacks with brick shafts, one axial, the other at the right gable end; the latter, unusually for Devon, is semi-circular on plan. As originally built, Pauls Shop had a two or three room-and-through-passage plan with the lower end to the right; the inner room may be an addition as a thick wall of full height divides it from the hall and its roof is not accessible. The hall was originally open to the roof, which has a jointed cruck truss; the truss over the lower end, which may also have been open, has a morticed collar with arched brace, a strengthening block in the apex, and what appear to be threaded purlins; both roofs are smoke-blackened. From the evidence of a double door-head between the passage and the lower end it is possible that the latter was divided into two service rooms; a round-headed wooden doorframe leads from the front of the passage into the hall. In the seventeenth century an axial stack was inserted into the hall, backing onto the passage. It is likely that the house was floored at this stage: the longitudinal ceiling beams in the hall and lower end have unstopped chamfers, the hall fireplace has a lightly chamfered wooden lintel, stone rubble jambs, and an oven projecting into the passage. The rear outshot, behind the lower end and the hall, has a blocked two-light wooden mullioned window

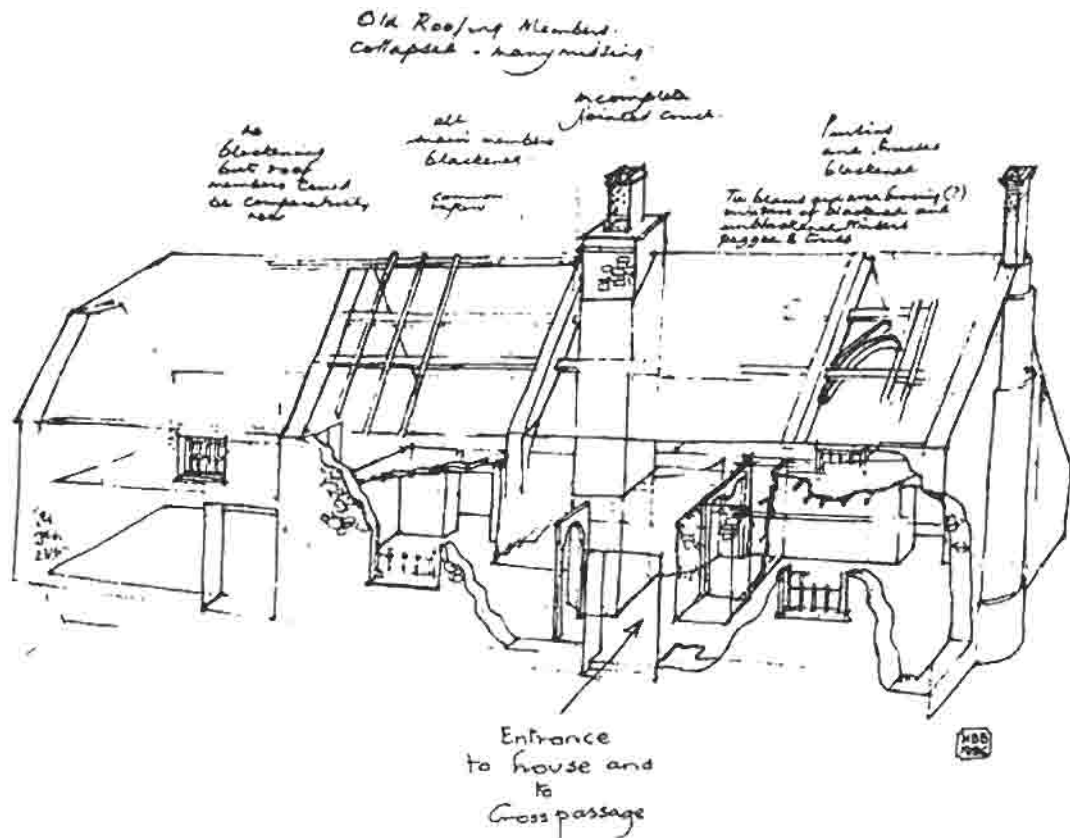


Figure 7. Pauls Shop, Germansweek, cut-away view (Brian Blakeway).

which may have been reset; if not, then it suggests a seventeenth century date for the outshut as a whole. The lower end stack was probably added in the eighteenth century; if not original, then the inner room, which remains unheated, may also have been built at this time. Further alterations followed in the nineteenth century, including framed stairs in the hall to the rear of the stack, two sixteen-pane sash windows to the ground floor, and two casement windows to the first floor. Apart from the effects of neglect, Pauls Shop has been little altered by the twentieth century. Almost as important as its intrinsic architectural interest, is its position in the centre of an unspoilt village. Pauls Shop is the oldest surviving house in Germansweek and its replacement by a modern building would necessarily detract from the visual character of the village as a whole.

The house forms part of an abandoned farmstead, but has independent access from the main village street. The owners live a few miles away and this farmstead forms part of their fairly extensive land holdings in the area. While showing no intention of using the building themselves, and no inclination to maintain it, they are unwilling to sell it. The Local Planning Authority, though aware of the situation, had been unsuccessful in their attempts to negotiate a solution with the owners. At this point the case was brought to the attention of the DEG Committee who wrote to West Devon Planning Department expressing concern at the situation and suggesting various ways in which it might be resolved.

These included the use of an English Heritage Fund specifically designated to assist local authorities in the compulsory purchase of threatened listed buildings. This approach met with a sympathetic response from the Conservation Officer for West Devon, who is currently pursuing negotiations for the purchase of Pauls Shop by the Devon Historic Buildings Trust. However, in the event of their failure or undue protraction, he acknowledges that there may be a need for recourse to statutory procedures.

The positive approach being adopted by West Devon is encouraging, though it remains to be seen how successful their efforts will be. At the centre of the problem are the responsibility that owners have for maintaining listed buildings, and the question of how far local authorities are prepared to invoke the penalties that owners may incur by deliberate neglect or by refusing to allow other people to take over responsibility for maintenance. Such issues need wider publicity. Meanwhile, the DBG needs to remain involved, not only because Pauls Shop is a worthwhile building, but also because its present predicament is one that is likely to confront many other historic buildings in the county.

Jenefer Chesher

THE PHILLIPS FAMILY OF WOODBURY

The village of Woodbury, some seven miles from Exeter, is not particularly striking architecturally. Most of the old houses are of the cob and thatch typical of East Devon, some having their beginnings in the fifteenth century, though much altered over the years. Cob continued to be the main building material until the last thirty years of the nineteenth century when the Rolle Estate - the ground landlords - began to build cottages using bricks and tiles from their own kilns at Withycombe. However, like other places in the area of the South Coast and close to centres like Exeter, Woodbury experienced an influx of well-to-do retired people, and a consequent building boom, from the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars onward. For over a century this building was dominated by one family - the Phillippses.

In 1761 Robert Phillipps, a carpenter and farmer's son, married Betty Critchard, daughter of Woodbury's leading master carpenter, Henry Critchard, whose spacious workshop alongside the village green had produced excellent work for the parish church over a period of three generations. If Robert had served his apprenticeship with Critchard, which seems probable, he would have received the grounding in craftsmanship and design on which the Phillipps family firm was to build its reputation. Of Robert and Betty's large family, Abraham (b.1765) became a master carpenter and William (b.1769) became a master mason. The two brothers worked in partnership and, in due course, were joined by their sons, Robert (b.1813), a master carpenter like his father, and William E. (b.1801), who not only followed his father as a master mason but also became highly skilled in decorative plasterwork.

Though it is not easy to be sure exactly who built what and when, the Phillippses developed so individual a style that certain features of their work

are almost as good as a signature. Building in the classical style until the 1870s, their houses exhibit good proportions and elegant lines - characteristics that are just as evident in simple cottages built for labouring people - like Castle Cottages - as in 'gentlemen's residences'. Much attention was given to detail. William was the driving force and responsible for basic design features fundamental to their work: deeply overhanging eaves, round-headed windows set below arches of brick laid on edge and in some cases - as at Christ Church, built in 1851 - recessed into blind arcades. Whether or not the Phillips family built the famous Indoor Riding School at Nutwell Court for Lord Heathfield (c.1798-1800), they later adopted many of the design features found there; certainly, a year or two later, they built the two entrance lodges and the mile-long wall that encloses the park. On the carpentry side of the business, Abraham and his son Robert produced notably exuberant porches and bargeboards [8], and much delicate internal woodwork.

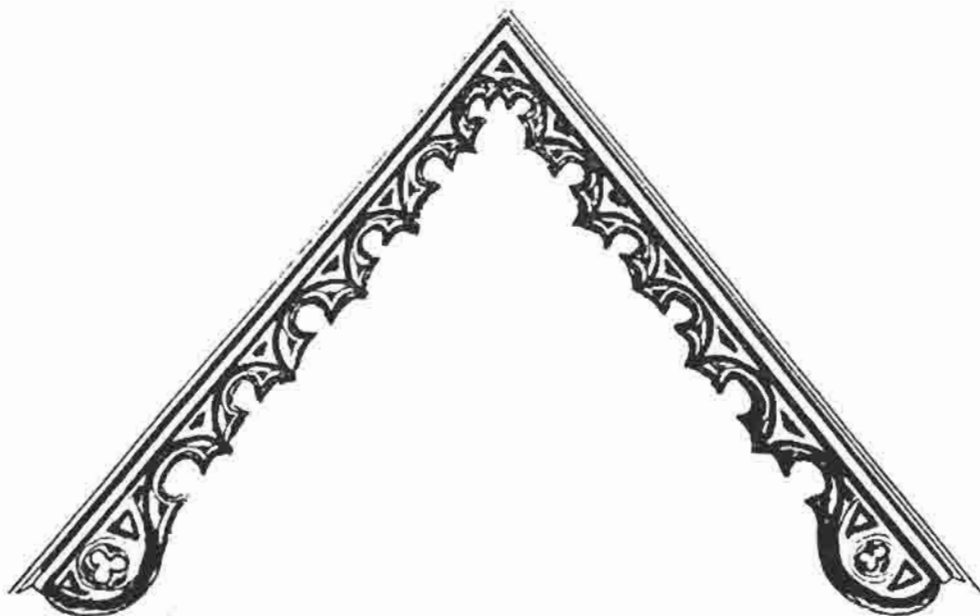


Figure 8. Barge boards at Bixley Haven and Knoll Cottage, Woodbury, 1849 by Robert Phillips (G. Shaw).

Other significant buildings followed. Among them is Oakhayes, built for the Rev. Francis Filmer in 1830, in a mixture of Heavitree stone, brick and cob, and stuccoed. The house has many of the Phillips' hallmarks, and some excellent plaster detailing [9]; the fine ceiling-rose in the drawing room is to be seen again in Bixley Haven, which the firm revamped for Dr Brent in 1849. A charming Phillips building is the old Post Office, designed to fit an odd, wedge-shaped site in the centre of the village - a site that necessitated some deft and unusual roof construction. Perhaps as early as 1848, this little building is now the only purpose-built nineteenth-century shop surviving in Woodbury, and still retains its original shop front and built-in post box. It was built for Woodbury's first postmaster, Abraham Green, who was William Phillips' nephew.

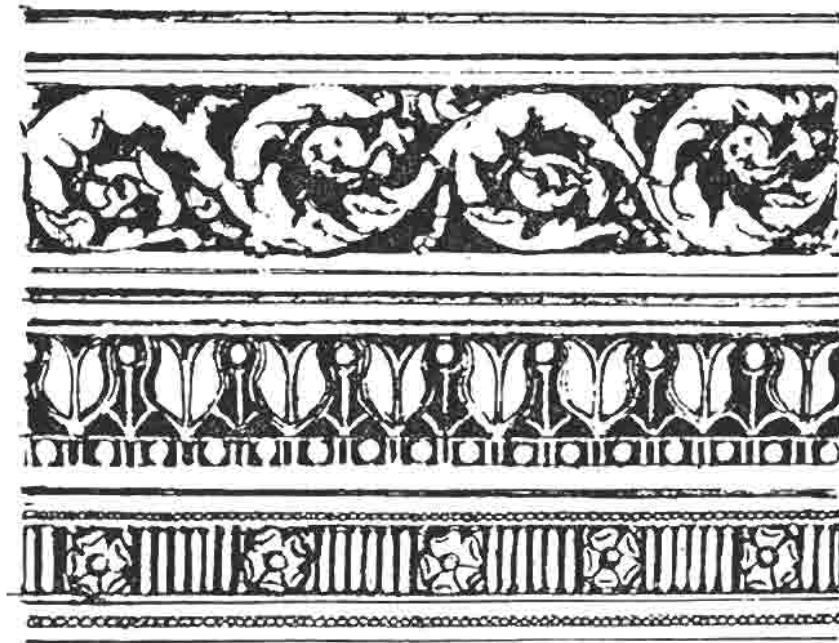


Figure 9. Plaster cornice, Oakhayes, Woodbury 1830 (P. Thompson).

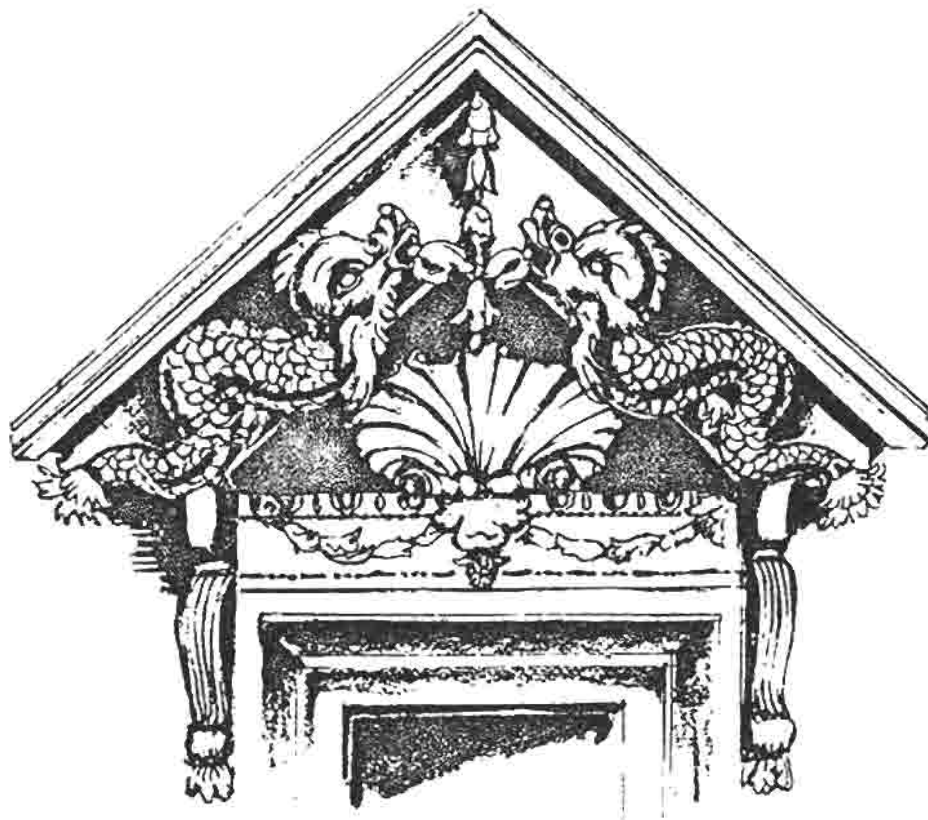


Figure 10. The Dolphin Porch, Rosemary Cottage, Woodbury 1833 (P. Thompson).

In 1833 the younger William married Lydia Hall and set about building himself a small house in the Broadway; from here he conducted his business until his death in 1877. Rosemary Cottage, as the house is called, has many interesting details and was obviously designed as something of a showpiece. Even the front path, made of well-set Budleigh pebbles, had WEP 1833 inlaid in paler stones. From the front the house appears to be built of brick, but the whole structure is actually of fine quality cob, some two feet thick, with a single skin of Flemish bond brickwork to the front: the effect is consciously smart, with closely laid joints, tuck pointed in white lime putty. But the most arresting feature of the front is the extraordinary porch (10). It is cantilevered out on excellently carved oak consoles decorated with acanthus leaves. Mounted on the front fascia boards are two heraldic dolphins of great vitality; inside the porch, over the door, is a scallop shell - a smaller version of that on the Shell House, Topsham. During recent restoration and conservation work by Herbert Read Ltd., traces of original gold leaf were discovered. It had been believed that the dolphins were made of plaster: William Phillips' great granddaughter could remember moulds kept in the attic at home when she was a child. But the dolphins are made of pine, apparently acquired by William Phillips and introduced into the porch: the moulds must have been made from the wooden originals with an eye to future use. It seems likely that the dolphins came from the family of William's wife, Lydia Hall. Her father was a Topsham sea captain who - by family repute - served under Nelson, and the dolphins apparently originated as part of the decoration of one of his ships. On the porch at Rosemary Cottage they are mounted head-up, a reversal of the usual heraldic position in which, doubtless, they would have been mounted on board ship. Other parts of the porch are filled with a whole range of motifs: leaves, vines, swags, pendants, beading. Evidently, most of these are re-used, for, where they are too small for the available space, new pieces have been added in plaster. For instance, two-thirds of the egg and dart moulding that runs the length of the door lintel is wood, the rest is a plaster replica: once painted, of course, it is impossible to tell one from the other. There is also much enjoyable detail inside the house, which has a nicely arched passage, a porch window to light the stairs, plasterwork in the hall and tiny sitting room, round-headed fireside cupboards, and panelled shutters to the downstairs windows. It is typical of Phillips' ingenuity, and his sense of display, that the three front bedrooms all have replica panelled shutters moulded in plaster on the window reveals.

The middle years of the century saw the Phillips firm busy with three important buildings in Woodbury. In 1850 a rift in the church between the High Anglican incumbent, John Loveband Fulford, and some of his parishioners resulted in a breakaway movement, led by Dr Brent, and to the building of Christ Church. The building still stands and has in recent years been refurbished, though it is a pity that funds did not run to the restoration of Robert Phillips' stylish little bell turret. Soon afterwards a decent house - now called Southcroft, in Town Lane - was built for the minister, again by the Phillips firm. Although shortage of money meant that there could be no 'extras' - like moulded skirtings and plaster cornices - its elegance of line and nicely-judged proportions give the house some distinction. The third building was the Court House on Globe Hill, erected in 1860-61. Until that date the Woodbury Bench of Magistrates had sat, once a fortnight, in the big upper room of The Globe Inn. After 1861 they had a building of their own, with living accommodation for a police sergeant and his family, and two lock-up cells. Though again using the round headed windows and deep eaves characteristic of the Phillips' manner, the Court House has a solidity and severity that is clearly expressive of its purpose.



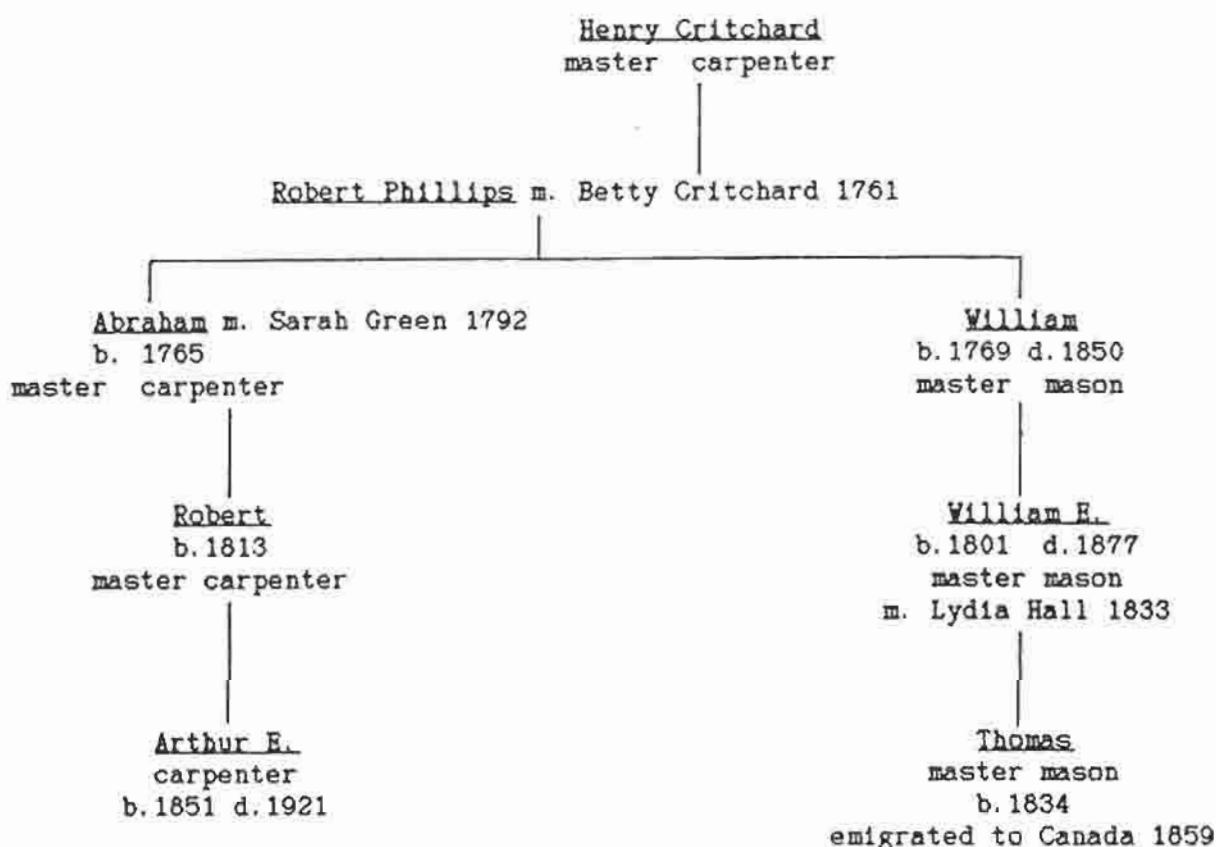
Figure 11. Woodbury Village School, 1871 (F. Kyle).

Up to the 1870s the stylistic vocabulary on which the Phillipses drew was, broadly speaking, classical: or, at least, that simplified classicism so familiar in small-scale late Georgian and early Victorian building. In 1870-71, however, the firm built Woodbury school to the designs of Robert Medley Fulford (4). Fulford was the son of the long-serving vicar of Woodbury, and one of the most prominent, and most interesting, Gothic architects in later nineteenth-century Devon. Building in Fulford's inventive and asymmetrical Gothic must have been a new experience for the firm - though the open timber porch and the bellcote with spirelet were not dissimilar to features found in Robert Phillips' work. Most regrettably, both features, and the visually arresting chimney stacks, were swept away in a recent modernisation of the building.

In the 1860s, William Phillips added a new enterprise to the family's activities - brick-making. Pursuing the mid-Victorian ideals of High Farming and agrarian management, the Rolle Estate undertook a massive scheme of land-reclamation and drainage in an area known as Bagmores, and a farm of that name was built on the site in 1866. Although the work was carried out by a London firm specialising in drainage, Phillips was quick to see the economic possibilities of the clay on the site. He set up his works close by, on the site of a disused lime kiln, and there produced very large quantities of drainage pipes, bricks and tiles: the enterprise was short-lived and the kilns had ceased production by 1870.

The day-work books of both Robert Phillips II and William E. Phillips have survived. They provide invaluable detailed about the day-to-day running of the firm, the names of the fifteen or so men they employed, and of the kind of maintenance and repair work that was a staple of the firm's activities. This included regular work on the local big houses - on Nutwell for the Drakes, who had succeeded Lord Heathfield, and on Winslade for the Porters, and work as far afield as Dawlish and Cullompton. There were parish contracts as well, and the Parish Vestry Minute Book records them building bridges and culverts and improving drainage.

By the 1870s, however, the fortunes of the Phillips dynasty - in Woodbury at least - had already peaked. In 1877 William died, carried to his grave by four publicans. In 1859 his son Thomas, then a young man of twenty-five, had emigrated to Canada: in Montreal he was to become a successful master builder, particularly known for his churches: so the family tradition feeds into later Victorian colonial expansion. Back at home, however, only Arthur E. Phillips (b.1851), out of master carpenter Robert's nine children, carried on the family firm. Arthur was essentially a carpenter, though he was willing to take on general building: he built his own house, Brookleigh, in about 1890 and The Beeches in Gilbrook for Mrs Harold Ware in 1900. But Arthur was the end of the line. When he died unmarried in 1921, the building firms of Jarman and of Summerfield had already taken the place that the Phillips family had occupied in Woodbury during the previous century.



Genealogy of the Phillips family of Woodbury.
Only the members of the family directly
involved in the building firm are shown.

Ursula W. Brighthouse

CROSS HOUSE, BISHOPSTEIGNTON

The nineteenth-century gentleman's villa in Devon, with its regional variations, is a building type that would repay a full study. The county has a rich inheritance of such buildings, although relatively little detailed work has been undertaken on the history of their erection and the evolution of the network of relationships between shrewd landowners, speculative developers and architect/builders that lies behind them. Some of the most notable examples are on the south coast, with several early nineteenth-century Gothick examples at Sidmouth. But, at the other end of the county, there is a particularly impressive estate of grand four and five storey villas of circa 1870, built on plots owned by the Ilfracombe Joint Stock Land Society at Torrs Park, Ilfracombe. Here, "all the more modern dwellings are fully provided with the most perfect sanitary appliances and arranged according to the more approved methods of domestic architecture" (Twiss and Sons' *Illustrated Guide to Ilfracombe*). There are well-known suburban villas at St Leonards, Exeter, on the former Baring Estate, developed by the Hoopers of Exeter. Less well known are the suburban villas at Tavistock, where the Duke of Bedford granted sixty year leases on villas before competition from the Watts Charity Trustees - who offered leases of between eighty and ninety years in Watts Street in 1859 - prompted the Bedford estate to offer similar terms on the Glanville Road development of 1875. Many smaller towns and coastal villages in Devon have more modest examples of half a dozen or so nineteenth-century villas which made their own impact on an area, involving local employment, subsidiary buildings for gardeners and grooms, and were often built in conjunction with improved sanitation and water supplies and the arrival of private gas companies.

Many surviving villas are under threat, both because of their size and because their large grounds are bread and butter to speculative developers. The common solution for suburban examples has been subdivision into expensive high quality apartments and flats. On the south coast the pattern has been conversion to retirement or nursing homes: this generally involves major internal remodelling to conform to fire regulations and is having a worrying impact on the whole economic structure of parts of the County, notably Torbay, where a large elderly population is stretching social services. We need to have a better understanding of the whole history of villa development in Devon to assist us in protecting this important building type.

Cross House, in Bishopsteignton, is an early nineteenth-century villa currently under threat from neglect and likely to be the subject of a planning application to demolish. In the early nineteenth century, Bishopsteignton, close to the facilities of the fashionable watering place of Teignmouth, became a favoured parish for retired army and navy officers. A number of superior gentleman's villas were built in the village and on its outskirts, standing in large grounds, with views over the Teign Estuary, and located at a genteel but convenient distance from Teignmouth itself. Several of these villas have survived including a notable sequence in Forder Lane, some originating as relatively small late eighteenth or early nineteenth-century houses, subsequently expanded, others of circa 1830 and relatively unaltered. Some retain their gardens complete, notably Huntly, now a home for retired officers, others have been subdivided with new housing built on the former gardens. Although there is considerable stylistic variety, indicating a more diverse economic background than the developments mentioned above, most of them have fine nineteenth-century

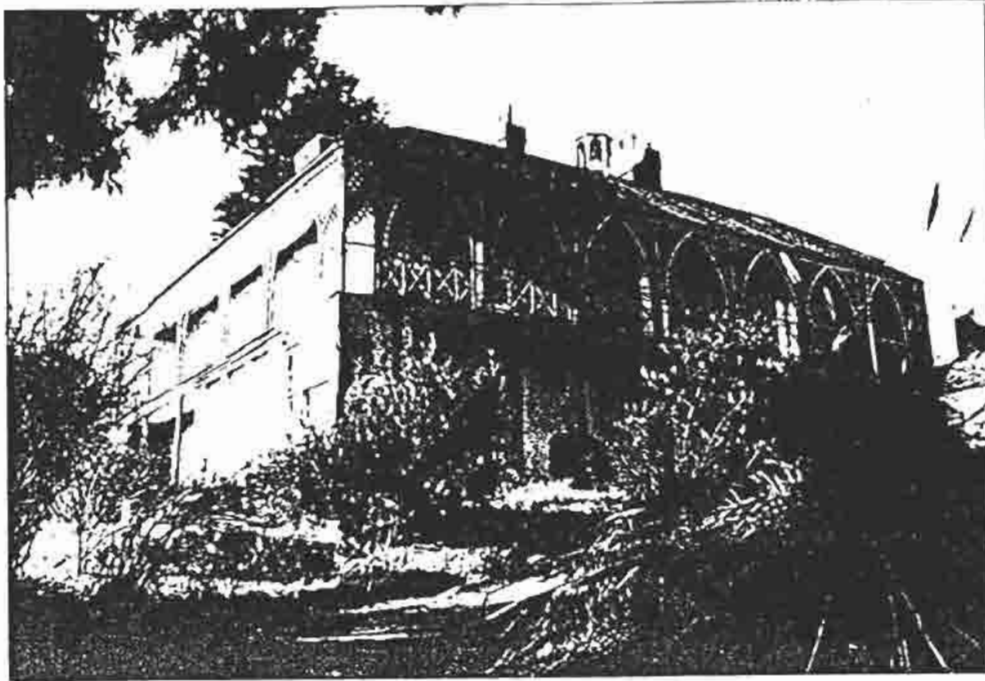


Figure 12. Cross House, Bishopsteignton

verandahs or conservatories to exploit the outlook across the Teign and this appears to have influenced the smaller town houses in the village, several of which have the 'Bishopsteignton verandah' with solid end walls incorporating round-headed niches presumably for statuary or plants.

Named after the medieval socket stone of a preaching cross in the garden, Cross House is one of the most important surviving large villas in Bishopsteignton, sited in the centre of the village and a focus in Fore Street, which is in the conservation area. Unlike some of the other villas, secluded by tall rubblestone garden walls, the house is visible from the street. The belief that it was designed by John Nash - a regular assumption concerning early nineteenth-century houses in the area - is a myth. Its large garden has already been truncated for new building but enough remains to interest a developer. Rectangular on plan, with a strikingly tall three storey service wing backing on to the steep hill of Fore Street, the building retains its original plan and interior features. On the three elevations facing the garden the deep eaves are extended over a very fine, unusual two-tier timber trellis verandah of a rather colonial character, with arched first floor openings and Gothic French windows to the first floor. The ground floor of the verandah is screened off at the west and south corners to form summer-houses with large windows with glazing bars in the form of a flower. There have been some insensitive minor alterations to the verandah on one side but otherwise it is intact and would be a great deal less costly to repair than an iron structure. Cross House was listed in the 1950s and changed hands about two years ago when it was bought by a developer. It has not been maintained since then, although it is said to be in reasonably good order considering many months of neglect.

The owners have indicated that they consider it to be beyond repair and are looking to clear the whole site prior to a redevelopment that will combine

starter homes - which are needed in Bishopsteignton - and luxury houses, both of which will add to the traffic problems in the village centre. In one respect, this is a straightforward case of a developer buying a listed building, then showing no sign of intending to maintain it, and every sign of intending to be rid of it for the development value of the site - a strategy that blatantly runs counter to the spirit of listed building legislation, and must come close to contravening the letter. Compared with the complexity of many other cases this is not a matter for negotiation or compromise. In this context, it is encouraging to know that the local community in Bishopsteignton recently successfully opposed the demolition of the extremely attractive group of listed school buildings in Fore Street and that these are now prospering as a much-used community centre and museum. On the other hand it is worrying to know that three important large houses in the parish have disappeared in recent years, victims of the pressure for new development: the seventeenth-century Radway Manor, listed grade II; Tapley, an early nineteenth-century villa, and Murley Grange, one of the later Victorian villas, graded III. This last was easily accessible to 'vandals', unaccountably well-equipped with chain saws, pending the application to demolish.

The Devon Buildings Group has been in touch with the Local Planning Authority expressing our concern about the condition of Cross House and offering our fullest support to any moves to encourage the present owners to repair the building - or sell it on to an owner of goodwill who will do so.

Jo Cox

CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUTURE NEWSLETTERS FROM MEMBERS OF THE GROUP WILL BE VERY WELCOME: THESE COULD TAKE THE FORM OF SHORT ARTICLES, ACCOUNTS OF INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS, REQUESTS FOR ADVICE AND INFORMATION, OR ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST. THE NEXT NEWSLETTER WILL BE SENT OUT IN THE AUTUMN.
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BIDEFORD - THE HISTORIC TOWN
AND ITS FUTURE

SATURDAY MAY 16TH
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